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A Shah's-Eye View of Trouble

President Carter and the CIA have been getting their lumps from just about everybody for not knowing what was going on in Iran, supporting the shah until it was too late and failing to cultivate contacts with the exiled Moslem leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

But there is one man, perhaps the only man in the world, who says he believes just the opposite: Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Embittered and increasingly paranoid since he was forced last month to flee the nation he had ruled and looted, the shah says he believes Carter and the CIA knew all too well what was happening in Iran. In fact, he claims the CIA engineered his fall from power and the ascendancy of Khomeini.

This astonishing interpretation of recent events, which flies in the face of conventionally accepted reality, was expressed just hours after the shah fled into "temporary" exile. He had a private talk with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat at Aswan on Jan. 18. Intelligence sources have provided us with a detailed report of this top-secret conversation.

While Carter's critics have faulted him for blindly supporting the shah in the face of mounting evidence that he was losing his grip on Iran, the shah credits Carter with the most astute diplomatic double-dealing since Talleyrand. And while the CIA's detractors have castigated the agency for ignor-

ing Khomeini, the shah told Sadat that as early as last spring he had undeniable information "that American agents are flirting with the opposition."

The U.S. embassy in Tehran convinced him, said the shah, that a prerequisite for better understanding of President Carter was the dismissal of Gen. Nematollah Nassiri, head of Iran's secret police. When he fired Nassiri in 1978, under U.S. pressure, he told the Egyptian president that left-wing, Moscow-led groups in Iran interpreted this as a sign of weakness, and stepped up their opposition with massive strikes.

The president later hailed Nassiri's ouster as evidence of the shah's concern for human rights, the shah said. He told Sadat that "the biggest double-crossing took place" when Carter reaffirmed his support for Iran, knowing full well that American agents already had "open channels" to Khomeini.

If that was the biggest, what the shah described as "the most disgusting double-crossing and treason [sic] was carried out" in the final days of the January crisis in Tehran. The shah, acting on American advice, decided to leave Iran temporarily to enable the military and his other supporters to keep Khomeini from returning and pave the way for the shah's eventual return to power.

Actually, according to the shah's unique view of events, the Americans

were warning the Iranian military that if they tried to seize control and bring the shah back, the United States would cut off all supplies and assistance. This warning was delivered, the shah told Sadat, to top Iranian brass by Gen. Robert E. Huyser, second in command of American forces in Europe, and word of the warning was passed on to Khomeini in Paris.

It was this sneaky power play, the shah said, that made it possible for Khomeini to return from exile and which thwarted the shah's plan to regain his throne. In light of his experience, the shah told Sadat, the Egyptian president should not trust the Carter administration or take its advice.

Footnote: A CIA spokesman said the agency could not comment on the shah's interpretation of events.